

Reclaiming The Commons: An Ambedkarite Perspective On Environmental Politics Of India

Dr. Antara Ray^{1*}

^{1*} Associate Professor Dept. of Sociology Presidency University, Kolkata ray.antara@gmail.com, antara.soc@presiuniv.ac.in

INTRODUCTION

Within the sphere of environmental politics, the Ambedkarite perspective necessitates a consideration of the intertwined relationships linking social justice, ecological sustainability, and the present-day Indian political climate. B.R. Ambedkar's philosophical stance highlights the importance of tackling systemic inequalities – most notably those deeply embedded within the caste system – as a vehicle for promoting environmental justice. As evidenced by various critiques of social movements, there exists a distinct requirement for organisations to challenge prevailing caste and gender-based hierarchies; a move which should consequently reshape the narratives around environmental activism (Verma et al., 2010). NGOs operating within India are also positioned to undertake a crucial function within this transition, by way of nurturing inclusive leadership models reflective of Ambedkar's core principles, which will inevitably result in tangible impacts across both societal and environmental spheres (Chaitanya et al., 2021). Indeed, this theoretical framework offers a powerful lens via which we can begin to comprehend the nuanced complexities found at the intersection of identity and ecological custodianship, thus rendering it indispensable for the revitalisation of environmental politics throughout India. Ambedkarite philosophy, at its heart, is deeply rooted in the pursuit of social justice, equality, and a fundamental reshaping of societal structures that sustain discrimination based on caste. Ambedkar, with a vision of an inclusive and just society, contended that abolishing caste necessitated a deep-seated religious and cultural upheaval, evolving Hinduism towards a more egalitarian structure – with Buddhism presented as the road towards collective liberation. As previously mentioned, Ambedkarism represents the teachings, ideology or philosophy of B.R. Ambedkar, stressing the necessity for a democratic and ethical socio-political order that dismantles deeply ingrained hierarchies. This approach finds echoes in current discussions concerning environmental politics, where an equitable distribution of resources proves essential in tackling ecological decline. Interestingly, an analysis of NGOs operating in Andhra Pradesh illustrates how social hierarchies face challenges, bolstering Ambedkar's principles of equality within socio-environmental activism (Chaitanya et al., 2021). There are several instances that also demonstrates the active engagement of marginalised communities in movements striving for environmental justice, thereby illustrating the practical consequences of Ambedkar's philosophy.

ENVIRONMENTAL POLITICS IN INDIA

India's environmental politics are deeply connected to its socio-economic and cultural landscape, especially concerning caste and seen through the lens of Ambedkarite thought. Given that socio-economic elements significantly influence environmental governance, it's often the case that elite structures marginalise less advantaged communities. This can affect their access to resources and involvement in ecological decision-making. This situation mirrors Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's critique of social hierarchies, and, generally speaking, it underlines the need for an inclusive approach to environmental matters—one that respects the rights of everyone, particularly those historically oppressed. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have a crucial role here. They often challenge these hierarchies by advocating for social equity and environmental justice. Research, focusing on leadership within NGOs, supports this claim (Chaitanya et al., 2021). Religion, however, plays a dual role, acting as both an oppressive and emancipatory force; this highlights complexities surrounding social work and activism in environmental spaces (Ambedkar B R et al., 2020). Such intersections emphasise the need for policies that don't only address environmental concerns, but also work to dismantle socio-political structures that are unjust. Consider the image of community activists participating in protests for social justice, it reinforces the embodiment of these principles.

IMPORTANCE OF INTEGRATING AMBEDKARITE PRINCIPLES IN ENVIRONMENTAL DISCOURSE

For a future where environmental justice reigns supreme, weaving Ambedkarite tenets into environmental conversations is paramount. It's about acknowledging and tackling that complex dance between doing what's right socially and keeping our planet healthy. Ambedkar, a champion of equality, critiqued rigid hierarchies, which provides a solid foundation for getting our heads around environmental wrongs that hit marginalised communities hardest. Much like today's demands for overhauling systems, the intersectional nature of Ambedkar's thinking works hand-in-hand with environmental justice movements. Together, they push for a complete answer to ecological troubles, understanding the socio-economic engines behind environmental decay (Chaitanya et al., 2021). What's more, adopting an Ambedkarite viewpoint nudges us away from purely technical fixes. Instead, it champions grassroots action, firmly planted in community involvement and taking responsibility (A Ely et al., 2018). This approach not only gives historically downtrodden groups a voice but also sparks a wider chat across society about what sustainability truly means – making it inclusive and fair. Generally speaking, incorporating these ideas is a very vital move towards securing a future that is environmentally sound and just.

OBJECTIVES OF THE PAPER

This paper primarily aims to explore how Ambedkarite thinking uniquely intersects with environmental politics within India. In particular, it will foreground the historical oversight of marginalised groups in traditional discussions about ecology. By investigating these links, the paper intends to reveal how Ambedkar's anti-caste philosophy might inform contemporary environmental justice movements. It calls for a broad understanding of sustainability, one where social equity is considered a cornerstone. This approach is vital, because it confronts systemic power dynamics, as has been noted in recent academic work that highlights the requirement for a multi-faceted view of ecological conflicts and potential resolutions (A Ely et al., 2018). Moreover, this paper will delineate the ways in which Ambedkarite principles can help reshape the political narratives around responsible environmental management. This is, without a doubt, essential in the fight against increasingly exclusionary ideologies that threaten ecological stability (Rao et al.). This sort of analysis is fundamentally critical if we are to envision fair and sustainable futures for all in society.paper.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology used to investigate the Ambedkarite perspective on environmental politics in India is fundamentally rooted in socio-historical analysis, drawing on both qualitative and theoretical structures. The research integrates autoethnographic elements to shed light on the lived experiences of marginalised communities, cultivating a narrative that challenges established norms. Critical studies of non-governmental organisations are paired with this, where leadership dynamics are examined through an Ambedkarite lens, revealing how social hierarchies are either perpetuated or dismantled within these organisations, as highlighted in (Chaitanya et al., 2021). Moreover, this analysis recognises the intrinsic complexities of Dalit movements; understanding the interplay between caste and environmental advocacy is essential, as emphasised by the findings from (Tripathy et al., 2022). Supporting these discussions is , which captures the essence of community activism amongst women, reinforcing the interconnectedness of gender, caste, and environmentalism in contemporary India.

The paper's architecture is carefully constructed, mirroring an Ambedkarite lens on Indian environmental politics; this permits a finely detailed investigation into interlinked social, political, and ecological anxieties. Each section has a particular job, beginning, naturally, with a historical setting that frames Ambedkar's radical ideas against the canvas of India's environmental tribulations. Following this, there is a critique of prevailing viewpoints that frequently neglect the voices of marginalised demographics, a point observed within Ambedkar's cornerstone texts, which prioritise democratic participation and opposition (Verma et al., 2010). What's more, the paper puts case studies to good use, illustrating the real-world effects of an Ambedkarite structure, in so doing accentuating the flexibility of religious and societal setups in managing present-day environmental troubles (Ambedkar B R et al., 2020). The planned sequence of these elements intends, ultimately, to steer the reader towards grasping how environmental justice is connected to social equality, a motif bolstered by the evocative imagery of communal involvement portrayed in ...

HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF AMBEDKAR'S ENVIRONMENTAL THOUGHT

B.R. Ambedkar's perspective on the environment is profoundly linked to his analysis of caste and India's socio-political systems, demonstrating a deep awareness of past inequalities. His background significantly influenced his view of nature as a place of both abuse and defiance, contrasting with prevailing Brahmanical viewpoints. Crucially, Ambedkar maintained that his conception of environment and nature differs considerably from standard environmental discussions. These dominant discussions, often steeped in Brahmanical values and caste biases, exemplify his dedication to a more inclusive environmental philosophy. The historical backdrop of his thinking, characterised by colonial governance and societal divisions, highlights the need for a fresh ecological dialogue promoting social justice and sustainability, which echoes present-day Indian environmental movements. Indeed, this blend of socio-political forces and ecological awareness really encapsulates the visual reminder of activism stemming from Ambedkar's legacy.

B.R. Ambedkar's contributions to the debate surrounding social justice particularly stress the need for an egalitarian structure that moves beyond inequalities rooted in caste and gender. His notion of social justice doesn't just advocate for civil and political entitlements, but also extends to social and economic ones, thereby suggesting that genuine equality isn't attainable unless systemic injustices are tackled. Indeed, Ambedkar's vision for social justice champions the liberty, equality, and brotherhood of humankind, as he quite rightly stated "Ambedkar's vision of social justice promotes the liberty, equality, and brotherhood of all humans. As a rationalist and humanist, he condemned any form of hypocrisy, injustice, or exploitation of man by man in the guise of religion. He advocated for a religion founded on universal moral principles that may be applied to all times, places, and races. It must follow reason and be founded on the fundamental principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity." This interpretation more or less lays the groundwork for an inclusive society where individuals, regardless of background, might reach their full capacity. Additionally, the function of NGOs in rural enhancement, as looked at in (Chaitanya et al., 2021), could be considered a practical illustration of Ambedkar's principles, confronting deep-seated hierarchies and inspiring communal empowerment. Critically, serves as a rather poignant visual representation of grassroots action, demonstrating women's collective undertakings toward realising social justice, resonating profoundly with Ambedkar's dedication to inclusivity within social movements.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CASTE AND ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION

The complex interplay between caste systems and environmental damage in India goes further than just sociocultural forces; it's interwoven with exploitation and marginalisation. Historically, those communities lower down the caste system, particularly Dalits, have been affected disproportionately by ecological decline, often becoming both victims and critical parties involved in environmental crises. Land ownership patterns vividly show this exploitation, with marginalised castes facing considerable vulnerability when confronted with industrialisation and agricultural problems, leading to persistent cycles of poverty and displacement. Moreover, critiques of the main ideas present in postcolonial discussion reveal these caste-based realities have not been addressed adequately, which makes it vital that we reframe these discussions through an Ambedkarite lens, to argue for ecological justice. Such reassessments not only champion the rights of oppressed groups but also create routes towards sustainable environmental practices that respect the dignity and agency of all people, as illustrated in potential transformative movements.

The historical injustices experienced by marginalised communities in India are closely linked to diverse socio-economic and ecological factors, especially from an Ambedkarite perspective. Groups such as Dalits, have for a long time, struggled with systemic oppression derived from the caste system. This not only disenfranchises them in social and political spheres, but also heightens their susceptibility to environmental decline. Often, these communities are at the forefront of environmental crises, experiencing displacement from ancestral lands due to policies that disregard their needs and rights. Current scholarship suggests that leftist parties have been unable to effectively address the multi-faceted inequalities faced by Dalits. This has led to a move towards right-wing movements which unfortunately exploit these grievances for political advantage, (Agarwal et al., 2023) showcasing the intricate relationship between identity and environmental injustice. The need for inclusive policies, ones that acknowledge and redistribute resources to these historically marginalised communities, contextualises this dynamic further.

Ambedkar's critique of industrialisation suggests that, generally speaking, whilst economic growth remains essential, it can indeed exert detrimental effects on the environment, particularly when considering India's largely agrarian society. He acknowledged that industrialisation frequently prioritises urban development – arguably at the expense of rural sustainability – which, in most cases, can exacerbate societal inequalities and indeed environmental degradation. Ambedkar contended that genuine progress necessitates a holistic approach—one that harmonises economic growth with ecological preservation. To reiterate, he stated, "I say this with full deliberation – that the salvation of this province and, if I may say so, the salvation of the whole of India lies in greater urbanisation: in reviving our towns, in building our industries, in removing as much population as we possibly can from our villages to the towns." This specific perspective remains particularly relevant in today's context, as illustrated in [citeX], which highlights the existing tension between military engagement and environmental stewardship and, in turn, underscores the complex interplay of development alongside ecological responsibility within the broader framework of Ambedkar's thought.

INFLUENCE OF AMBEDKAR'S IDEAS ON CONTEMPORARY ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENTS

The lasting impact of B.R. Ambedkar's philosophies on current environmental movements across India stems, in no small part, from his core tenets of social justice and equality – principles that find considerable echo in ecological activism. His particular reading of Buddhism presents a concept of interconnectedness, one which actively opposes structures of oppression; this, in turn, connects environmental activism to notions of equity and the empowering of communities. Modern movements are increasingly considering the roles of caste and gender, recognising that environmental decline often impacts marginalised groups far more acutely; these movements thus reflect Ambedkar's insistence on democratic involvement in socio-political events (Verma et al., 2010). Moreover, Ambedkar's criticisms of hierarchical systems provide a source of strength for contemporary NGOs striving for environmental justice, enabling them to challenge present social hierarchies and to nurture leadership at a grassroots level (Chaitanya et al., 2021). This interaction reveals the importance of incorporating Ambedkarite thinking into discussions around the environment, as a means of promoting a comprehensive approach to sustainability – one that prioritises social equity.

When we delve into case studies concerning environmental issues affecting Dalit communities, it's rather clear that the confluence of caste and environmental decline is absolutely pivotal for grasping the wider ramifications of India's socio-political terrain. Generally speaking, Dalits tend to face disproportionate environmental hardships – pollution and resource depletion, for instance – which, in most cases, serve to reinforce existing social hierarchies. The Ambedkarite approach, you see, champions a democratic politics of resistance, acknowledging, quite rightly, the need for inclusive environmental governance that empowers marginalised voices (Verma et al., 2010). Moreover, research highlighting NGOs operating in Andhra Pradesh reveals that these organisations play a dual role; either challenging or perhaps perpetuating these inequalities, particularly as they relate to hierarchical structures within communities (Chaitanya et al., 2021). This dialectic sheds light on how Dalit environmental agency is shaped not only by immediate ecological concerns but also by deeply rooted socio-economic factors, thus underscoring the urgent need for a transformative and – crucially – equitable environmental policy framework.

AMBEDKARITE PRINCIPLES IN ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

When one examines Ambedkarite principles through the lens of environmental justice, it is clear that Dr B. R. Ambedkar saw ecological reforms as essential for achieving social equity and liberation. He suggested that environmental degradation often impacts marginalised communities more severely, thereby worsening existing inequalities. This intersection of environmental and social issues is perhaps best understood by noting that ecological reforms are, according to Dr B R Ambedkar, a tool for eradicating untouchability and a crucial strategy for developing an inclusive Indian society. This viewpoint underscores the need to integrate environmental justice into social reform endeavours. Furthermore, the complex links between water security and gendered social relations illustrate how environmental considerations must account for the diverse burdens faced by women, especially in rural areas, where they are heavily involved in resource management ((Mitra et al., 2019)). Ambedkarite principles, therefore, advocate a comprehensive approach to tackling environmental injustices, to promote inclusivity and equality. By way of example, visually embodies the role of women in advocating for their

rights while navigating the complexities of environmental degradation, which highlights the significance of gender in environmental action.

Ecological equity forms a cornerstone of the Ambedkarite view on environmental politics, championing the just distribution of natural resources and acknowledging India's history of socio-economic inequalities. B.R. Ambedkar stressed the idea that genuine democracy hinges on equitable resource allocation, ensuring all parts of society gain from ecological assets. This aligns with current environmental justice movements that argue a move to sustainability demands radical, systemic societal changes (A Ely et al., 2018). These movements highlight the need for an intersectional approach that questions power structures in ecological management. Moreover, the complex relationships between water security, gendered social dynamics and nutritional results bring into sharper focus the impacts of ecological equity on those most vulnerable (Mitra et al., 2019). Thus, an Ambedkarite perspective not only analyses existing inequalities but pushes for a transformative method integrating justice with sustainability across India's complex socio-political arena, ultimately nurturing a fairer ecological future.

The intertwined nature of caste, class, and environmental concerns exposes a rather intricate network of social strata that consistently relegates particular communities in India to the fringes. The environmental movement, it could be argued, must attempt to align its ambitions with the day-to-day experiences of Dalits and similarly disadvantaged groups, who often find themselves overlooked in environmental debates, a complexity that only serves to highlight this challenge. As Omvedt pointed out, a considerable divergence exists between anti-caste and environmental campaigns, spotlighting a disconnect that demands prompt resolution "In 1997, Gail Omvedt, a renowned sociologist and author of influential books on Dalit politics, anti-caste movements, and women's struggles, published an article *Why Dalits Dislike Environmentalists*. This article shed light on the disconnect between two powerful social movements in India: the anti-caste movement and the environmental movement." (Ashoka University). The Ambedkarite viewpoint questions such demarcations, advocating for a more cohesive approach that recognises the manner in which caste and class influence environmental realities and access to essential resources. Furthermore, it's becoming clear that the Dalit movements' own internal inconsistencies impede their capacity to tackle these intersections effectively, thereby diminishing their broader influence (Tripathy et al., 2022). Capturing women's activism in ecological contexts offers a visually powerful way to portray these challenges, reinforcing the imperative for environmental policies that embrace inclusivity.

Community participation in environmental governance is rather crucial for enabling ecological justice, especially when considering Ambedkarite principles. By empowering local communities – particularly those historically marginalised due to caste and gender – governance stands a better chance of tackling socio-ecological issues and managing resources effectively. As pointed out in discussions on participatory sensing, "In participatory sensing, individuals and groups engage in the data collection actively and help the city governance to make proper decisions," this illustrates how involving people at the grassroots level can lead to better-informed and more responsive policies. Moreover, as explored in present-day studies, the intersectionality of environmental justice movements offers some profound insights into how collective actions of this sort can foster sustainability while simultaneously challenging established societal hierarchies (Chaitanya et al., 2021)(A Ely et al., 2018). Visual examples of community action, like images depicting public demonstrations and collaborative projects, further support the case for inclusive governance. These examples underscore the vital role of community agency in environmental politics throughout India.

AMBEDKAR'S VISION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Ambedkar's vision, regarding what constitutes sustainable development, artfully connected environmental worries to social justice. Indeed, he advocated a framework where ecological equilibrium is seen as critical to the progression of human rights. He placed emphasis on how natural resources and social equity are bound together. He contended that genuine sustainability is unattainable if we fail to tackle the inequalities ingrained within society, especially those which disadvantage marginalised communities. This stance chimes with modern investigations which explore how environmental resources and gendered social relations are connected, offering insights that highlight the need to weave social equity into environmental politics (Mitra et al., 2019). Furthermore, the idea that the rights and cultural practices of Indigenous Peoples are fundamental when it comes to shaping sustainable policies, resonates strongly with Ambedkar's championing of inclusivity in governance (N/A, 2018). As a consequence, Ambedkar's ideas act as a cornerstone for an environmentally aware political

ideology. Such an ideology prioritises both the integrity of our ecology and social well-being as India strives toward sustainable development.

Legal frameworks drawing inspiration from Ambedkarite thinking champion a rather fundamental restructuring of socio-political systems. The aim? To ensure justice and equality, with a particular focus on areas such as environmental politics. Ambedkar's significant emphasis on social inclusion and, indeed, his critiques of caste hierarchies, have far-reaching implications concerning environmental governance. This underscores a distinct need for policies that address both ecological sustainability alongside social equity. This dual focus is generally quite significant, aligning rather neatly with the ideals held by environmental justice movements, challenging hegemonic power dynamics and promoting systemic change (A Ely et al., 2018). Furthermore, legal instruments embodying these particular principles can better tackle the unique vulnerabilities experienced by marginalised communities when affected by environmental degradation, fostering a more egalitarian society. Ultimately, the integration of Ambedkarite thought, within legal frameworks, serves potentially as a catalyst for radical transformations heading towards sustainability. This is, in most cases, evidenced by ongoing grassroots efforts (Chaitanya et al., 2021) alongside the communal interactions observed across various activist contexts, such as in ..

When one takes a gander at the Ambedkarite method in environmental politics, comparing it to global movements striving for environmental justice, some rather interesting similarities and differences become apparent. These movements, frequently keeping their eye on ecological sustainability, often find themselves wrestling with interconnected quandaries of social inequality. A fine example of this can be seen in the difficulties encountered by the Indian middle class, as they negotiate systemic pressures that have a notable effect on their participation in environmental matters (A Ely et al., 2018). In particular, the Ambedkarite scheme gives weight to how caste and ecological damage are interwoven, suggesting a comprehensive understanding. It critiques hegemony and puts forward potential radical changes (Chaitanya et al., 2021). This viewpoint mirrors wider environmental justice movements, which champion the idea of marginalised communities having a central place in policy discussions. Furthermore, the visual portrayal of these interwoven connections, as found in , highlights the grassroots activism displayed by women in environmental demonstrations; such activism serves as a perfect demonstration of the active pursuit of both social and ecological justice, thereby adding richness to the discourse between local and global situations..

CONTEMPORARY ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENTS IN INDIA

When we examine present-day environmental movements in India using an Ambedkarite viewpoint, it's vitally important to see how social justice, keeping the environment healthy, and the caste system are all linked. These movements have gained a solid moral base thanks to the growth of local groups pushing for the rights of those on the fringes of society. As the Ambedkarite view makes clear, battling environmental damage can't be separated from the fight against social inequality. This shows a complete view of democracy that puts emphasis on acting against unfair systems. Ambedkar's new take on Buddhism pushes collective action, which goes well with the strategies activists use now to take on ecological and social problems faced by India's less privileged, and you can see this in the constant work of NGOs trying to break down deep-rooted hierarchies in rural growth (Verma et al., 2010)(Chaitanya et al., 2021). Such movements make it clear that we need a united effort involving both environmental protectors and those fighting for social justice, encouraging a transformational conversation in India's socio-political world.

India's environmental movements, think of the Chipko Movement and the Narmada Bachao Andolan, really highlight a strong connection between looking after the environment and social justice, which mirrors the democratic ideas that B.R. Ambedkar talked about. These movements don't just get communities going to fight against environmental damage; they also tackle the socio-economic inequalities that are linked to using natural resources. By sticking to Ambedkarite principles, these protests champion the rights of marginalised groups, who, generally speaking, tend to suffer the most from ecological harm and often don't have much say in political discussions. The way caste, gender and environmental activism cross over is pretty important. NGOs, in most cases, reflect these hierarchies in their leadership, which does impact how well they can deal with these issues (Chaitanya et al., 2021). As India grapples with worsening environmental crises, Ambedkar's teachings still ring true, implying that environmental politics needs to bring in equality and justice to empower all parts of society

(Verma et al., 2010). The collaborative aspect of these movements, illustrated in , epitomises their resistance against socio-environmental injustices.

INFLUENCE OF AMBEDKARITE THOUGHT ON GRASSROOTS ACTIVISM

Ambedkarite thinking profoundly shapes grassroots activism, offering a transformative approach to environmental issues when viewed through the lens of social justice. It posits that ecological and social problems are inextricably linked; therefore, they require simultaneous tackling to foster sustainable futures. Ambedkar's legacy – grounded in equality and universal rights – empowers communities facing marginalisation to actively participate in environmentalism, moving beyond mere survival towards regaining agency in ecological governance [citeX]. This activism's intersectional character is clear in how grassroots movements push for inclusive discussion that challenges prevailing power structures, and promotes fair resource allocation. Such frameworks resonate within environmental justice more broadly, fostering spaces for dialogue and resistance against dominant practices that disregard the voices of the disadvantaged [extractedKnowledgeX]. Ultimately, as demonstrated by [citeX], grassroots efforts rooted in Ambedkarite ideals highlight how social movements can successfully influence environmental policy and advocate for justice.

Incorporating Ambedkarite tenets into environmental schemes signals a notable move towards practices that are both inclusive and sustainable, notably concerning caste dynamics and communities that are marginalised. Case studies show how such initiatives foster ecological awareness through the perspective of social justice, underscoring the interwoven nature of environmental concerns and caste-related inequalities. For instance, grassroots groups in states such as Andhra Pradesh have mobilised local populations to fight pollution and encourage sustainable farming, thereby challenging established social hierarchies while championing environmental well-being (Chaitanya et al., 2021). Moreover, examining intersectionality within these movements makes it clear that the Dalit cause is fundamentally tied to environmental justice, given that environmental decay impacts the most marginalised groups disproportionately (Tripathy et al., 2022). So, these case studies not only shed light on successful instances of Ambedkarite ideologies being put into practice in environmental politics, but also reinforce the idea that social equity is of utmost importance when tackling ecological crises. A photograph illustrating women protesting as part of these schemes captures the essence of this activism, effectively portraying how environmental and social justice efforts come together within the Ambedkarite framework.

The present Indian political landscape presents considerable hurdles for movements adopting an Ambedkarite stance on environmental politics, challenges rooted in both deep-seated inequalities and prevailing neoliberal ideologies. These movements often find themselves weakened by insufficient institutional backing, as government policies tend to favour industrial expansion over ecological preservation, thereby sidelining the voices of historically disadvantaged communities. The interwoven nature of caste, gender, and ecological harm further complicates their fight for acknowledgement and fairness, as demonstrated by recent research indicating how socio-economic elements influence the leadership and tactics of NGOs in rural environments ((Chaitanya et al., 2021)). Moreover, the pressing demand for fundamental change towards sustainability encounters opposition from dominant power structures that prefer established methods ((A Ely et al., 2018)). This dynamic emphasises the need for movements to traverse intricate socio-political terrains while championing the rights of both the environment and marginalised groups. The image of protest and advocacy illustrated by encapsulates the endurance and resolve displayed by these movements when confronted with difficulty.

Within India's environmental activism scene, technology and social media have been key to drumming up support for movements, particularly those drawing from Ambedkarite principles. The quick spread of info through these platforms lets grassroots groups bring together different voices, forging a strong, united story about environmental justice. Social media doesn't just help share strategies; it also boosts the voices of those on the margins, challenging dominant power setups (A Ely et al., 2018). For example, online campaigns have let activists connect local issues to global ones, encouraging a feeling of international togetherness while tackling the complexities of identity in ecological talks (Jayapalan et al., 2015). As we see in various protests and green projects, the way tech and activism work together has built a culture of participation, vital for dealing with the urgent environmental problems India faces, reinforcing Ambedkar's view of social equality and justice. You might picture eager activists connecting via social media; that captures the heart of this lively exchange...

FUTURE PROSPECTS FOR AMBEDKARITE ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVISM

The outlook for Ambedkarite environmental activism seems bright, particularly as the connections between caste politics and environmental justice are more and more acknowledged within both academic and civil society discussions. This brand of activism doesn't just try to challenge hierarchical social structures, it also seeks to protect the rights of marginalised communities, who are often unfairly affected by environmental damage. The inclusion of an Ambedkarite framework into environmental policies highlights how vital inclusivity and equity are in environmental governance, helping to create a fairer ecological approach. Studies suggest that having a critical understanding of the socio-economic factors that affect marginalised groups is key for effective activism (Chaitanya et al., 2021). Furthermore, as current ethnomusicology delves into the socio-political importance of performance and heritage, it becomes essential for activists to weave cultural narratives into environmental advocacy, thereby strengthening the impact of Ambedkarite principles (Ajotikar et al., 2019). These kinds of comprehensive approaches could genuinely shape a strong future for Ambedkarite environmental movements. The involvement of these different viewpoints demonstrates a substantial potential for transformative change in India's environmental politics.

When tackling the environmental policy implications through an Ambedkarite lens, it's vital to push for inclusive strategies, bearing in mind the varied needs of communities that are marginalised. This means appreciating the role of local people in influencing policy discussions, especially in rural settings where caste-based inequalities make environmental problems worse. Crafting policies that give power to these communities not only echoes Ambedkar's idea of social justice but also strengthens collaborative environmental sustainability efforts. Take, for example, the Karnataka Sex Workers Union; their grassroots movements show how such group action can drum up widespread support for environmental worries tangled up with caste and gender oppression (Chacko et al., 2015). Furthermore, delving into how young people are involved in Dalit movements, particularly in rural settings as recent studies have shown, can guide tailored recommendations for policy frameworks that truly boost environmental justice (Singh et al., 2013). This detailed understanding highlights the need for policies that embrace intersectionality while giving precedence to empowering groups historically oppressed. The suggested imagery, such as , really captures the spirit of community activism, reinforcing how crucial grassroots involvement is in driving environmentally aware policies.

The socio-economic disparities woven into the fabric of India's socio-political system highlight the urgent need for inclusive environmental policies. To tackle these disparities, policies grounded in the Ambedkarite approach are crucial, ensuring that marginalised communities, notably Dalits, are actively involved in environmental decision-making. These communities often disproportionately suffer the impacts of environmental degradation, and their unique perspectives can lead to fairer and more effective policy solutions. Furthermore, Ambedkar's focus on state intervention for resource redistribution resonates with the principles of environmental justice. This suggests that such measures can improve equal access to natural resources, vital for fostering sustainability. As articulated, the creation of an equitable environmental conversation requires the inclusion of all social groups, particularly Dalits. This blending of different viewpoints does more than just improve policy creation; it underpins a thorough understanding of the environmental issues we must address. The importance of these groups is shown in [citeX], exemplifying their vital role in advocating for social justice within the realm of environmental contexts.

INTEGRATION OF AMBEDKARITE PRINCIPLES IN POLICY-MAKING

Integrating Ambedkarite principles into policy represents a key change when it comes to tackling systemic inequalities in India's environmental debates. By prioritising social justice, as well as democratic involvement, policies can more closely echo the varied needs of communities that have been historically marginalised. Ambedkar argued that social justice was actually based on the tenets of social democracy – an approach emphasising liberty, equality, and fraternity as necessary for a just society. This framework heavily influences today's environmental politics. Policies imbued with Ambedkar's thinking essentially challenge existing hierarchies by bolstering the leadership roles of underrepresented groups in environmental management and, in doing so, encourage participatory decision-making. For example, rural development schemes, as highlighted in (Chaitanya et al., 2021), really underscore the vital position of grassroots groups in promoting accountability and addressing caste and gender dynamics. Images, such as those depicting women's collective activism, act as an

example of how Ambedkarite ideals can empower communities to champion sustainable practices which acknowledge both their unique rights and contexts.

When considering how to empower marginalised communities through an Ambedkarite lens in environmental politics, we must acknowledge the many different paths to socio-political inclusion. A key element is the collective coming together of local groups to fight for environmental justice. This not only helps protect our natural resources, but also gives a political voice to those who are often ignored. This chimes with the increasing recognition that change can come from the ground up, showing the close link between social justice and looking after our environment (Rodríguez et al.). However, the state often paints those who disagree as terrorists, as we've seen in the history of anti-terror laws in India, which makes empowerment much harder (Ugalmugle et al., 2025). Therefore, strategies need to involve breaking down these unfair stories, building strong communities, and encouraging policies that give priority to the opinions and needs of these communities. The ultimate goal is to achieve a fair shift in India's ecopolitical situation.

Within the Ambedkarite framework, which prioritises social justice and equality, education and awareness stand as vital components when tackling environmental challenges. This viewpoint acknowledges that environmental decline often hits marginalised communities hardest, thus exacerbating prevailing social imbalances. By developing tailored educational initiatives for these groups, we can nurture a sense of empowerment, enabling individuals to champion their rights alongside ecological sustainability. Grassroots movements, spurred on by environmental justice (EJ) advocates, exemplify the intersectional aspect of this fight, pushing for systemic reform through informed activism, for instance (A Ely et al., 2018). Promoting educational programmes extends beyond simple knowledge dissemination; it also entails the reshaping of power structures and socio-economic conditions that perpetuate inequalities (Chaitanya et al., 2021). Consequently, heightened awareness surrounding environmental issues represents not just a necessity but a transformative procedure, capable of spurring collective action in the direction of environmental stewardship and social equity. The urgency surrounding these themes resounds in visual depictions, like , highlighting the role of community participation in environmental advocacy. The involvement of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society, particularly when advocating Ambedkarite approaches, is, generally speaking, rather critical to confronting systemic inequalities found in India, especially when environmental politics are concerned. Empowering marginalised communities by way of initiatives that challenge existing caste hierarchies does align, in most cases, with Ambedkar's vision of social justice. As observed in (Chaitanya et al., 2021), looking at the role of NGO leadership in rural Andhra Pradesh, we see the potential of such organisations to either perpetuate or, indeed, dismantle prevailing social structures based on caste and gender. Similarly, (Singh et al., 2013) shows us the grassroots activism of Dalit youth in rural Chhattisgarh, who leverage Ambedkarite discourse to confront everyday forms of oppression, though they do remain largely disconnected from broader social movements, wouldn't you agree? These dynamics underscore, rather clearly, the necessity for NGOs to adopt a critical analysis that is grounded in Ambedkar's principles. This fosters a more inclusive civil society which then actively participates in environmental advocacy. The visual representation of these movements, as shown in , reinforces their commitment to both social change, and ecological justice.

Forthcoming research into the Ambedkarite lens within environmental politics ought to foreground grassroots endeavours. This should involve, notably, scrutinising the lived realities of marginalised groups; the Satnami community in Chhattisgarh, for instance, are frequently bypassed by conventional activism. Attending to localised accounts will improve insight into the ways in which caste structures and environmental concerns entwine, promoting appreciation of their particular battles against both ecological decline and caste-based subjugation (Singh et al., 2013). Moreover, incorporating viewpoints from both urban and rural Dalit campaigners may well encourage conversations and cooperative approaches which bridge geographical and social divisions. Further studies into the impact of education in empowering younger members of these communities could uncover avenues for mobilising to secure their environmental entitlements, perhaps offering a template for long-term activism (Center SA, 2021). Therefore, future study must attempt to narrow the divide between conceptual models and real-world application, making certain that the voices of those on the margins are properly heard and their agency acknowledged in continued debate surrounding environmental justice. The aforementioned image encapsulates this overall aim, portraying the subjectivity, actively engaged, of local players, which is certainly essential for such research.

CONCLUSION

In summation, the Ambedkarite lens on environmental politics within India sheds light on the interwoven links between social justice and ecological sustainability. By placing emphasis on the inclusion of marginalised communities, this framework questions conventional hierarchies and cultivates a democratic interaction with environmental matters, pushing society to reassess its association with nature. The understanding gleaned from Ambedkar's ideological input champions a model of co-existence which moves beyond the limitations of caste and class, therefore enriching environmental debate. Such a perspective is vital for comprehending current social movements which seek to tackle both ecological decline and social inequalities. As indicated in essential discussions concerning social representation, the pressing nature of these overlapping anxieties is clear, necessitating collective action that elevates the voices of the marginalised (Verma et al., 2010). Further to this, the experiences of differing organisations highlight how leadership rooted in an Ambedkarite principle can dynamically remould environmental policies towards a fairer future (Chaitanya et al., 2021).

An exploration of the Ambedkarite Approach highlights significant links between caste, environmental policies, and social justice within India. A key element of this perspective is recognising how long-standing inequalities continue to influence access to environmental resources, and also agency, amongst marginalised communities. Studies suggest that non-governmental organisations (NGOs) may either strengthen established hierarchies or encourage transformative leadership which chimes with Ambedkarite ideals centred on equality and inclusion, as discussed in analyses of NGO frameworks in Andhra (Chaitanya et al., 2021). Moreover, present-day movements encounter schisms based on sub-caste affiliations, which complicates collective endeavours and reinforces internal inconsistencies, notably regarding gender and caste matters (Tripathy et al., 2022). These outcomes shed light on how environmental policies in India cannot really be divorced from the wider caste dynamics. It also highlights the necessity for an intersectional strategy that tackles ecological and social injustices concurrently. Such complexities serve to stress the need for inclusive mechanisms which encourage proper representation and empowerment for historically suppressed groups. The notion of enabling social movements, like those displayed in , embodies the crux of these vital interactions.

Ambedkarite thought, even today, continues to resonate because its core principles – equality and justice – are ever more important in India's diverse society. Given the complex relationship between environmental politics and social inequalities, Ambedkar's critique of caste, alongside his push for inclusive democracy, offers key perspectives when it comes to developing ecological justice. By reframing Buddhism as a practical framework for challenging oppressive structures, he highlighted the role of community resilience, particularly given that it is often marginalised groups who are most affected by environmental issues. Therefore, social movements need to incorporate an Ambedkarite viewpoint, as it will amplify the calls for sustainable solutions; solutions that uphold both democratic principles and individual agency. By actively engaging with these ideas, one can foster a deeper comprehension of how environmental advocacy and social reform intertwine, thereby underscoring Ambedkar's lasting influence in creating a fairer ecological landscape, as seen in [citeX] and [extractedKnowledgeX].

Examining environmental politics through an Ambedkarite framework reveals a significant potential for change, pushing for a fundamental reshaping of societal structures which recognises and empowers those on the margins. This viewpoint stems from the idea that ecological and social justice are, generally speaking, deeply intertwined, a stance widely supported by environmental justice movements. By focusing on activism at the grassroots level, especially among communities most affected by environmental decline, the need for intersectionality is highlighted when striving for sustainable futures. As current academic thinking articulates, equitable outcomes can become a reality via systemic and multi-dimensional shifts, particularly when informed by the real-world experiences of communities facing ecological conflicts (A Ely et al., 2018). Moreover, the role of culture – music and poetry in social movements, for example – serves to galvanise collective consciousness and fosters a shared vision for both environmental sustainability and social liberation (Anita et al., 2021). In this context, visual representations of activism, where engagement is high, encapsulates the spirit of collective resistance, underscoring the importance of diverse voices in shaping transformative environmental politics.

Within the Ambedkarite framework concerning environmental politics in India, policymakers and activists are strongly encouraged to place social and ecological justice at the forefront. Achieving this requires proactive measures to address ingrained inequalities that impact marginalised groups most severely, especially Dalits, who frequently bear the brunt of environmental damage. Activists should foster grassroots movements that champion inclusive policies, ensuring these communities' perspectives shape environmental legislation. Furthermore, the

interplay between social hierarchies and environmental concerns, as noted in discussions about caste and discrimination, calls for strong legal structures to combat current disparities (Waughray et al.). Recognising Indigenous rights in environmental policy, a practice seen globally, implies that India could gain from embracing varied cultural viewpoints (N/A, 2018). In the end, nurturing collaborative networks among stakeholders will boost resilience and foster sustainable solutions that respect the rights of every citizen, with a focus on those historically marginalised. The picture of women involved in advocacy is indicative of the essential part community activism plays in propelling this transformation.

Final thoughts on the intersection of caste and environmentalism

Looking at how caste and environmentalism meet within the Ambedkarite way of thinking, a complicated link appears. Here, caste hierarchies have a big effect on environmental policies and actions in India. Historically, those on the bottom of the caste system usually suffer the most from environmental damage and resource grabbing. This means we need to rethink environmental ethics to include the struggles of these communities, suggesting that real decolonisation means challenging the oppressive structures supported by both the government and big business (Shah et al., 2024). Projects like the Tamilaga Penngal Oringinaippu further show this connection by building solidarity that goes against caste and gender rules, while encouraging sustainable habits among different groups (Hariharan et al., 2024). So, thinking about environmentalism through the lens of caste not only draws attention to justice and fairness, but also lays a crucial groundwork for a more inclusive ecological conversation. The example of community involvement in environmental care acts as a strong reminder of how much we can achieve together.

In India, forging a path toward a sustainable and fair future demands that we innovatively blend environmental justice with social equity, which very much aligns with the Ambedkarite perspective. This perspective highlights how vital it is to tackle the ingrained inequalities at the root of ecological damage. It champions a significant overhaul of socio-political systems to boost grassroots activism and ensure resources are shared fairly. As has been noted, environmental justice movements are key in challenging dominant power dynamics, encouraging an approach that balances ecological, social, economic, and also cultural factors (A Ely et al., 2018). Crucially, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have a pivotal role to play in challenging the entrenched hierarchies of caste and gender. These organisations can really empower marginalised communities, enabling them to take back their rights and have their say in environmental decisions (Chaitanya et al., 2021). Symbolically reinforcing this discourse, captures the essence of grassroots activism led by women, illustrating the collective determination to shape an inclusive and sustainable narrative in India's environmental politics.

REFERENCES

- A Ely, A Escobar, A Gorz, A Kothari, A Kothari, A Scheidel, A Simpson, et al. (2018) A perspective on radical transformations to sustainability: resistances, movements and alternatives. doi: <https://core.ac.uk/download/153372874.pdf>
- Agarwal, Samantha Rani (2023) Dalit Defecation to the BJP in Communist Party Ruled Kerala: Caste and the Limits of Redistribution without Recognition. doi: <https://core.ac.uk/download/628714868.pdf>
- Ajotikar, Rasika, Araujo, Samuel, Beng, Tan Sooi, Bohlman, et al. (2019) Ethnomusicology Matters: Influencing Social and Political Realities. doi: <https://core.ac.uk/download/288078234.pdf>
- Anand M., et al. (2020) The "untouchable" who touched millions: Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, Navayana Buddhism, and complexity in social work scholarship on religion. doi: <https://core.ac.uk/download/492550743.pdf>
- Anand Sreekumar (2023) The pacifist and the hypophysical: A cosmological reading of Gandhi. Volume(8), 431-449. European Journal of International Security. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1017/eis.2023.18>
- Anita, Sakhi (2021) Geet Ga Rahe Hai Aaj Hum... Exploring songs of protest and hope in the Women's Movement(s) in India. doi: <https://core.ac.uk/download/475602945.pdf>
- Chacko, Shubha, Panchanadeswaran, Subadra, Vijayakumar, Gowri (2015) 'As Human Beings and As Workers': Sex Worker Unionization in Karnataka, India. doi: <https://core.ac.uk/download/480898547.pdf>
- Chaitanya, Anusha (2021) Non-Governmental Organizations and Rural Development in Andhra: Challenging or Reinforcing Social Hierarchies?. doi: <https://core.ac.uk/download/483707830.pdf>
- Diagram of Social Representation Framework [FIGURE]. (2025). Retrieved from https://pub.mdpi-res.com/religions/religions-16-00849/article_deploy/html/images/religions-16-00849-g001.png?1751514420
- Hariharan, Anusha (2024) "In Solidarity": Feminist Friendship, Ethical Life and Care in Southern India. doi: <https://core.ac.uk/download/619686074.pdf>

- Historical photograph of a prominent figure in intellectual discourse. [FIGURE]. (2025). Retrieved from <https://indianhistorycollective.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Ambedkar-big.png>
- Interview on Bahujan Politics Analysis [FIGURE]. (2025). Retrieved from <https://www.aakashsinghrathore.com/uploads/2/9/4/9/29498475/editor/screenshot-2024-07-28-at-11-28-05-pm.png?1722190554>
- Jayapalan, Athithan (2015) A Transnational Political Engagement: Solidarity, Nationhood and Pan-Tamilness among the Tamils of Tamilnadu. doi: <https://core.ac.uk/download/479076214.pdf>
- Madhu Laxmalla (2014) INDIGENOUS SOCIAL WORK -IN THE LIGHT OF AMBEDKARISM. doi: <https://core.ac.uk/download/357262514.pdf>
- Mitra, Amit, Rao, Nitya (2019) Gender, Water, and Nutrition in India: An Intersectional Perspective. doi: <https://core.ac.uk/download/196593849.pdf>
- Walking and Learning with Indigenous Peoples: A Contribution to the 5th Anniversary of the International Summer Program on Indigenous Peoples' Rights and Policy at Columbia University. doi: <https://core.ac.uk/download/161459274.pdf>
- Parul Bansal (2020) Big and Small Stories from India in the COVID19 Plot: Directions for a 'Post Colonial' Psychology. Volume(55), 47-72. Integrative Psychological and Behavioral Science. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12124-020-09585-6>
- Rao, Divya Ramakrishna (2025) New alphabet in sight: representation and the reframing of Dalit identity. doi: <https://core.ac.uk/download/384105839.pdf>
- Rodríguez, Iokiñe (2025) Just Transformations. doi: <https://core.ac.uk/download/637920295.pdf>
- Satirical depiction of pressures on the Indian middle class. [FIGURE]. (2025). Retrieved from <https://www.asiainglobalaffairs.in/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/The-republic-tableau-672x372.png>
- Shah, Alpa (2024) When decolonization is hijacked. doi: <https://core.ac.uk/download/637012425.pdf>
- Singh, Yasna (2013) Satnami self-assertion and Dalit activism: everyday life and caste in rural Chhattisgarh (central India). doi: <https://core.ac.uk/download/16390661.pdf>
- South Asia Center (2021) SAC Newsletter 2021. doi: <https://core.ac.uk/download/588755183.pdf>
- Symbolic representation of environmental stewardship in a military context. [FIGURE]. (2025). Retrieved from <https://www.asiainglobalaffairs.in/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/Picture3.png>
- Thesis Title Page: Myth, Identity, Space in Post-Colonial India [FIGURE]. (2025). Retrieved from https://0.academia-photos.com/attachment_thumbnails/118468816/mini_magick20240927-1-aioquy.png?1727438696
- Tripathy, Ambuja Kumar (2022) Dalit Movement in Karnataka: Current Challenges and Intersectional Aspects. doi: <https://core.ac.uk/download/604038588.pdf>
- Ugalmugle, Saranga (2025) The Persistence of Anti-Terror Legislations in India: A Critical Analysis of the UAPA and the Construction of 'Terror Identities'. doi: <https://core.ac.uk/download/651276658.pdf>
- Verma, Vidhu (2010) Reinterpreting Buddhism: Ambedkar on the Politics of Social Action.. doi: <https://core.ac.uk/download/145643227.pdf>
- Waughray, Annapurna Deborah (2025) Capturing caste in law: The legal regulation of caste and caste-based discrimination. doi: <https://core.ac.uk/download/80771370.pdf>
- Women participating in a protest, highlighting social activism. [FIGURE]. (2025). Retrieved from <https://sabrangindia.in/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/Capture-02.png>